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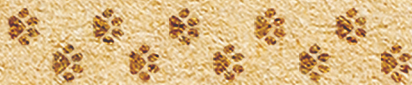
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Photo by Lydia Pruett

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[FROM THE EDITOR]

by Andy Lien

We Do

When I was growing up in rural Minnesota, I craved more. I wanted to know more of this world, more of who's in it, more of how I fit into it, more of how I could help others fit in. I remember my mother either won our bought us tickets to see Sweet Honey in the Rock perform at the College of St. Benedict, still in rural Minnesota, but in a college town outside of St. Cloud. It was probably my first concert in a concert hall. I can remember the night was dark, in must not have been during the summer. I was in awe of these amazing women of color and their songs. Their voices. The fact that they used their bodies for percussion and how low the woman singing bass could go. They did not sit properly with their knees together, as women are supposed to sit, but sat as if they each had a cello between her legs. Instead of the posture to make room for an instrument, the posture was to make each of them an instrument. They gave me my senior solo that was about the AIDS quilt which I sang to a surprised audience a few years later: "They unfolded your lives, one by one. They laid out your patchwork under the sun." They helped me be political with my singing voice. I have loved them all these 25 years since.

A few weeks ago, I was able to see them share the stage with Cantus, our own a cappella superstars, at Orchestra Hall. I'd already seen Cantus with Chanticleer recently and was absolutely gobsmacked by the talent within that small and mighty group of men. Cantus, who has been in the news for bringing a bit more politics into their programming recently. Cantus, who rose even higher in my esteem because of this programming. With the members of Sweet Honey in the Rock (which includes an American Sign Language interpreter as a matter of course), Cantus brought us all along for an evening of meshing music and cultures and styles and rhythms. It was as if we were at a wedding and the two families who would be brought together by the union were starting to dance. They each showed who they are, and

then they joined together and brought us with them on their musical journey of give and take, learning and growing.

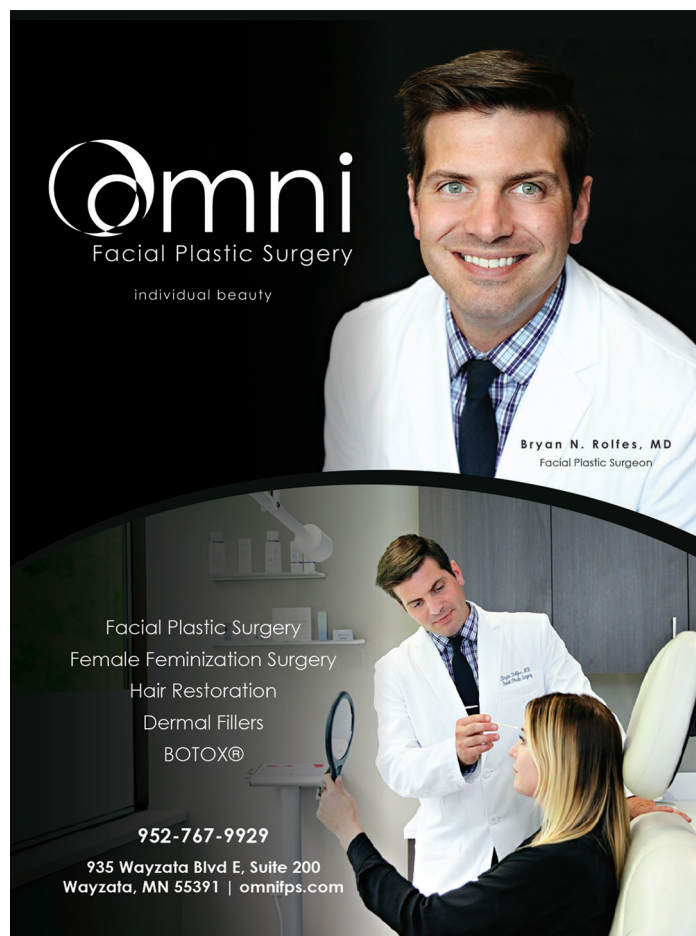
One of the songs that always soothes my soul is "We Are..." from Sweet Honey's 1996 album *Sacred Ground*. They sang it when they were on stage in Minneapolis and it reminded me of some of the themes I've talked about in this magazine. How this community is full of people who belong to each other. How what binds us together is a love, and the politics that surround that love. How we stand on the shoulders of giants and have our chosen family members, as well as how we pass on an inheritance to those who come after us in this community. There is a very real legitimacy that this community struggles to keep after seeming to have attained it in a few areas, but this song is a reminder about how it never hurts to validate ourselves and what we're doing; that we exist and we do things, both simple and complex. The song starts very simply, "For each child that's born a morning star rises and sings to the universe who we are." And later, the refrain reminds us and then reiterates how "We are sisters of mercy, brothers of love, lovers of life and the builders of nations. We are seekers of truth, keepers of faith, makers of peace and the wisdom of ages. We are our grandmothers' prayers. We are our grandfathers' dreamings. We are the breath of our ancestors. We are the spirit of God."

So, whether you take that song literally or figuratively, sacredly or secularly, we are the people who have inherited roles in this community and we also will be passing our roles on to the next. We are grandchildren and we will be grandparents. This community is a family and we bring our own to it as we bring them together with others at a wedding. By saying, "We do."

We are. We do. We will be. Together.

With love,

Andy ■



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Looking Ahead – and Behind

What will be the outcome of any given marriage of two loving minds? I'm by no means your go-to guy for marriage advice, mine own having lasted the previously mentioned two years less two days.

Still, that proved a longer run than Romeo and Juliet's 48 hours. The Guthrie's recent production of Shakespeare's classic emphasized that mayfly brevity. Their kinetic youth and hormone-fueled emotions vibrate through the other young people of the feuding Montague and Capulet clans; insults hurled, gestures insultingly displayed, threats shouted in the public square. Rowdy, open-sword-carrying teens unwilling to be bested or dissed: what could go wrong? Over them all looms a tower, its clock face lit, hands turning remorselessly as it counts down towards the doomed youngsters' demise.

Young they were; Juliet not quite 14, Romeo, of indeterminate age, embodying every love-struck teen. On Sunday, Romeo first sees Juliet. Sparks fly; he erases the previously desired Rosaline. Monday, Romeo and Juliet marry and consummate the union. Tuesday–Wednesday, clan complications and plots. Thursday evening, they are dead. Mere hours from first spark to the dying of the light.

Time flows for all couples, yet there is always that first spark, and, inevitably, that last light. The question is, how best to use the time in-between. My observations, if not experiences, lead me to suggest one particular thing to the marriage-bound:

Keep that spark lit, as early settlers banked an ember, however small, to light the next day's fire, for as Loretta and Conway sang it, "There's nothing cold as ashes, after the fire is gone."

Keep your personal spark as well: old friends, hobbies, interests and enthusiasms. If you relinquish your spark, how can you continue to light the daily fire? There will be adjustments for couplehood, but keep on skiing, painting, playing poker, having wine with a pal. Some couples cleave together till death them do part, while others split, and must take up single life again. It's prudent to have friends available in good times and bad.

I suppose mine's not the *coup-de-foudre*, romantic vision of marriage (two years less two days?) but in addition to cultivating that spark, one might also consider the old Roman, "Si vis pacem, para bellum," or the more contemporary Boy Scout, "Be Prepared." ■

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Socially Savvy: Get in the Game

BY SEAN RYAN AND EDWARD PIECHOWSKI

Downton Abbey fans flocked to get a glimpse of the stylish set, to see people doing glamorous things while wearing their best outfits, sipping martinis, and dining in the grandest fashion. It's no surprise that their post-dinner retreat was to a table in the well-appointed drawing room for a game of cards. That game of cards was always Bridge. Our winters have not been the same without the Granthams' witty banter, so let's create some of our own over a round of cards. We're teaming up with the University Club of Saint Paul to host "Bridge & Cocktails at the Club." It's high time we step out in a stylish outfit and live our own Downton Life.

Bridge at the club kicks off on Sunday, October 15. Offered at the historic University Club on gorgeous Summit Avenue, the weekly event will be open to club members and non-members alike. Whether you're a beginning player or a card shark, this gathering will be the perfect place to develop your technique. Feel free to bring a friend—or to make new ones over the winter!

Beginners will be given hands-on classes with teaching and coaching them on the basic skills of play. Bridge is a game where strategy and communication merge, so be ready to be social! More advanced players who are familiar with the game will have access to the coach to ask questions and hone their skills to better communicate with their partners. The process of bidding and conveying points can be tricky for even the most experienced players!

We promise a friendly environment in which you can gain the knowledge and skills to navigate the game of Bridge—and to enjoy the afternoon.



Photo courtesy of The University Club of Saint Paul

Join us, your hosts, Edward and Sean of Socially Savvy. Together we will broaden our social networks, develop some new skills, and revive an old passion.

Get in the Game: This year *we* will be the stylish people doing the glamorous things in the tasteful environment of the University Club. Together, we'll be living the Downton lifestyle. ■

DETAILS

What: Bridge at the Club

When: Begins Sunday, October 15, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Where: The University Club of Saint Paul, 420 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul

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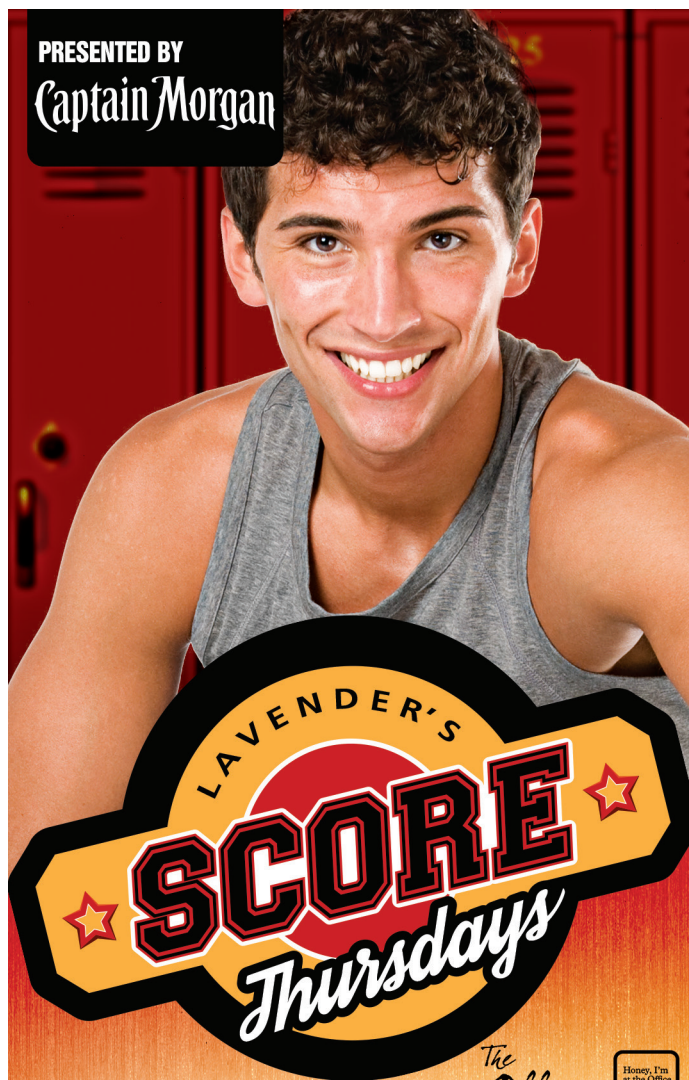
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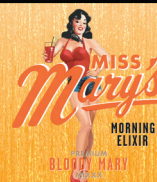




Photo courtesy of Urban Growler Brewing Company

“GETTING HITCHED” — URBAN GROWLER BREWING COMPANY PROVIDES TIME TO VOW AND SPACE TO WOW



BY TERRANCE GRIEP | PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF URBAN GROWLER BREWING COMPANY

When you hoof your way through the Capital City’s Saint Anthony Park neighborhood, it’s not hard to invoke an earlier time, especially when you get to 2325 Endicott Street. You notice straw-colored brick that, supported by licorice-colored steel, forms a farm-like edifice, and, as if recalling a dead stranger’s memories, you can almost see a tweed-hatted, denim-swathed laborer fastening a wagon’s pole shaft to its trace, its trace to its harness, and its harness to its reins. You can almost hear

the rhythmic clip-clop-clip of hooves leaving the building, the round, wooden grind of a wagon’s spoked wheels as it gossips with the cobblestones. You can almost whiff the smell of...the smell of...well, it’s probably best not to dwell on the pongs of that Gilded Age.

If you tread past the doorlike windows and enter through the windowy door leading to Suite 11, you’ll find an inviting establishment that has come into existence only recently—relatively speaking, that is. Urban Growler

Brewing Company was opened in July 2014 by head brewer Deb Loch and her partner, Jill Pavlak. These two combined their complementary skills and passions to create great beer, food, and space for everyone.

That last point is key. “Everyone needs to feel loved and accepted,” Deb Loch elaborates. “Today there’s so much that divides us. At Urban Growler, Jill and I wanted to create a culture where we could come together—GOP, DFL, gay, straight, whatever—where we’re brought together by a common culture...beer.”

That last point is key, as well. Urban Growler isn’t just a trendy taproom, it’s a packaging microbrewery. That means that beer crafted in the brewery taproom is poured into kegs and further distributed to metro area retailers. (Growlers, not incidentally, are handled, refillable half-gallon bottles popular amongst beer connoisseurs...because moderation is for frou-frou wine drinkers.)

The in-house hops soda can also be enjoyed within the building where it was created, that building being a repurposed horse stable used by the Saint Paul Police Department before the invention of the high-speed chase. The Urban Growler features a kitchen, a taproom, a beer garden, and a patio, and that’s not all: it also includes places that can take that space-for-everyone-ness to its most strident form: marriage.

Loch and Pavlak know about that particular institution—they are, in fact, life partners as well as business partners...and although their marriage ceremony was a low-key affair that predated the opening of their business, it left a mark on their approach when aiding and abetting the



matrimonies of others. “Our main goal is to make it easy for people,” Loch assures. “We meet with the couples and figure out what they want and what we can offer. We’re always trying to reduce their stress. There are so many possibilities.”

The opportunity to borrow space itself arrived in gradating possibilities. Urban Growler’s first rental area was an upstairs room nicknamed, for the obvious reason, the Hayloft. Spatial capacity was increased with the addition of the Barrel Room. An even-more-recent addition has compounded

potential social volume to nearly-Madonna-wedding-levels...that is, Urban Growler can now accommodate from 150 to 175 possible wedding guests.

This area has been used for multiple rehearsal dinners, myriad wedding receptions, and precisely one nuptial ceremony. “So far,” Loch qualifies. “Many of the renters create themes for their weddings or their dinners. The only limit is their imagination. The exposed brick creates real ambience. It’s not just a dinner—it’s an experience.”

Loch reports “rave reviews” from people who have turned the space into their own experience...but when pressed, they’ve made suggestions that led to improvements in air conditioning and accessibility. Says Loch, “We’re always listening.”

The establishment’s website promises, “neighborhood atmosphere, specialty house-made beers and tasty food menu come together to create a memorable event for you and your guests.” You might not think of a brewery as place to say your vows, but a repurposed stable might, in fact, be the perfect place to get hitched.

CIRCLING THE WAGONS—REHEARSING, RECEIVING, OR BETROTHING AT URBAN GROWLER

Although parking can be a misadventure within Saint Anthony Park, it’s not much of an issue for visitors of the Urban Growler in search of a hitching post. A large parking lot is adjacent to the former stable, and other lots abound in the area. Further, because the Urban Growler is helpfully surrounded by roads, on-street parking is also available.

Once inside, you have multiple options where celebrating is concerned. The first of these is the commodious Barrel Room, part of which is offered for your partying needs. When it’s not teeming with celebrants indulging in its singular character, the Barrel Room also serves, as its name implies, as a barrel aging room. The space can be configured for seated meetings or cocktail height tables for receptions and socializing.

If you’re not stairs-averse, you might consider the Hayloft, which looms over the Taproom. It can house up to 49 partiers, thanks to its previous iteration as an actual, lowercase-h hayloft, harkening back to its years as fuel storage for the police horses who protected and served your great-grandparents. Much like the Barrel Room, the Hayloft can be configured in any number of ways.

The Taproom is available for rent exclusively on Mondays, the particulars of which are handled on a case-by-case basis. And, come to think of it, if you’re the type of person who would want to get married on a Monday, you’re probably not going to set foot inside a brewing company in the first place.

Regardless of the day, catering options abound: a virtual tray-o-co-pia is available—veggie trays, fruit trays, sandwich trays, and hummus trays, each accompanied by a side of appropriately savory garnish; finger foods are available for your tactile and gustatory pleasure—spinach dip crostini, bruschetta, chips and pico, beer cheese ball and crackers which

serves 15 to 20 guests...or five writers.

The buffet proffers two possibilities: a carnitas bar served with cheese, pico de gallo, and sour cream or spinach and artichoke dip served with tortilla chips, bad carbs be damned.

And then there’s everybody’s favorite indulgence, dessert—cookie trays, brownie trays, cheesecake trays. Urban Growler offers no penalty for those who, like us, order All Of The Above.

Obviously, beer is what makes Urban Growler unique amongst similar space-renters. Urban Growler recommends such a service be taken in the Hayloft which has its own bar. The beer itself is made in 10-barrel batches under the watchful eye of Deb Loch, who attained the rank of Master Brewer in specific deference to her ownership. “Our brews may be traditional,” the website supposes, “like Cowbell Cream Ale®, non-traditional like our Big Boot™ Rye IPA, or inventive like our Plow to Pint® Series that uses the harvest of local farmers to create beers with a unique twist.” The buds-blowing selection adds a whole new meaning to the phrase “hitting the hay.”

The Urban Growler requires a \$25, non-refundable booking fee, as well as two weeks advance confirmation with final food and guest count. No outside food or beverages are allowed, but seriously—who would have room for either at this point, anyway? ■

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Celebrating

[WEDDING STORY]

THE CHORUS COUPLE

BY KASSIDY TARALA / PHOTOGRAPHY BY STUDIO LAGUNA PHOTOGRAPHY

Photos by Lauren B Photography, Studio Laguna and Anna Grinets Photography



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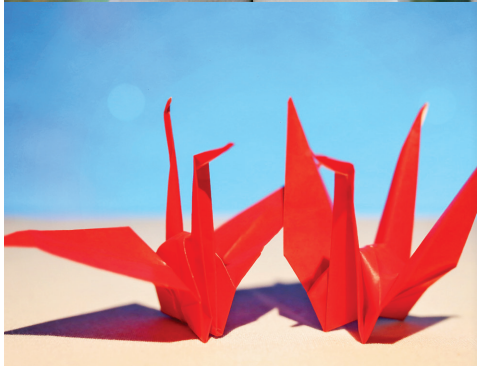


Meeting the love of your life while doing one of your favorite things is just about the most ideal situation that could happen. For Kai and Brett Chin, this was the beginning of their unique love story. The couple met in the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus in February 2012, and were engaged in just a little over a year in August 2013.

Kai popped the question after consulting Brett's cousin about the best way to go about the proposal, which he advised was to propose while doing something that they both love. "We just moved to Boston in July, and Brett signed us up to do the Freedom Trail 5K, a historical guided 5K run, which shows you Boston's most historical sites. They said it would be a light workout, so I thought I would be okay since I'm not a runner. The whole time I had the ring in my pocket, which I bought for him in Buenos Aires, Argentina while we were sailing on Semester at Sea, and I was so nervous that I would lose the ring. We were running on the last leg of this run. I was so nervous, tired, and my knee hurt so bad, and Brett kept on insisting that we could stop. I kept on telling him no because I just wanted to get to the end of this run. We finally got to the end at the USS *Constitution* in the Charlestown Naval Yard where we jumped on a ferry that sails across harbor back to downtown Boston," Kai explains.

While the perfect moment presented itself, Kai just couldn't work up the courage to ask Brett the question that had been burning a small ring-shaped hole in his pocket. Kai repeatedly filled the empty air with "I love yous," but he couldn't muster

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ➔





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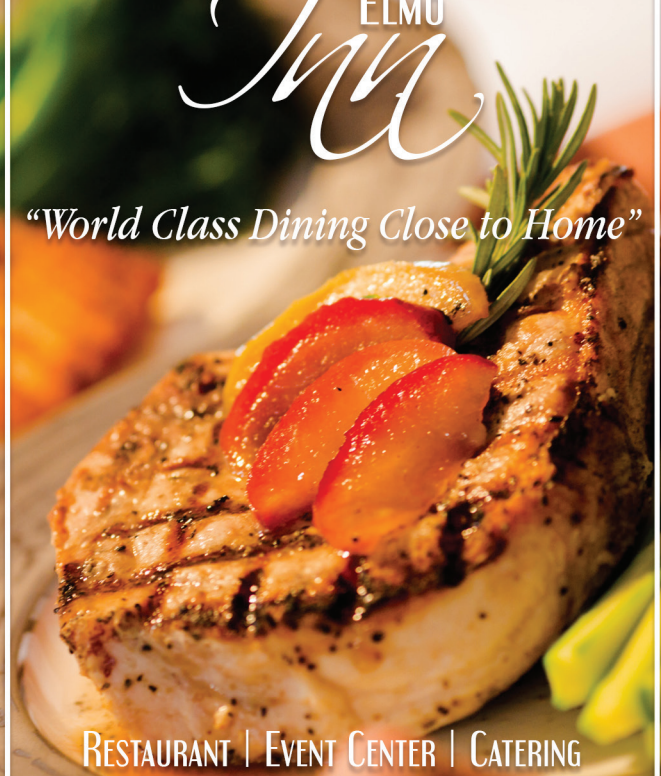
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up the courage to pop the question...yet.

"We finally got off the ferry and started walking around downtown by the aquarium and found a bench on the corner of India Street and John Fitzgerald Road where I sat Brett down and popped the question. He didn't answer for a second or two, so I felt like I had to fill the silence with how much I love him. Then he put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Kai, of course,'" says Kai.

Brett and Kai, engaged for nearly four years, tied the knot on June 17, 2017 at the Minnesota Zoo. "We wanted something different. We wanted a wedding where our guests would have an experience and something that was kid-friendly. When we entered Discovery Bay, we realized that we wouldn't need to decorate much. We were surrounded by over 1.1 million gallons of water, and the glow from the tanks was so beautiful and calming," Brett says.

To get in the zoo spirit, Brett's brother supplied some animal masks that he frequently wears with friends to take funny pictures. The wedding upheld the fantastic zoo environment that wowed Brett and Kai, despite them having to change their original venue plan. "We were supposed to have our ceremony outside at the Lakeside Terrace but it was raining so we ended up having our ceremony inside at the Tropics Trail, which was an amazing option. The reception was inside at Discovery Bay," says Brett.

The couple was surrounded by beloved friends and family, and the officiant was even a friend they met at Semester at Sea, Lisa Slavid. Additionally, Brett's younger brother, Ryan Chin, his girlfriend, Vivian Wan, Brett's best friend and fraternity big brother, Christopher Aston, and Brett's cousins, Michael and Kimi Van Wickle stood up for him. Kai's brother and sister, Will Nessel and Maren Schletz, Kai's brother-in-law, Nick Schletz, his best friends, Nathan Pendergrass and Ali Kuchman, and his cousin, Kellen McGill, stood up for Kai.

With 165 guests, Brett and Kai had their work cut out for them to find food and desserts that would feed—and satisfy—every mouth at the wedding. "We really wanted an ice cream cake but the logistics for serving ice cream cake wouldn't work for the amount of people that we had. We decided on red velvet cupcakes with sweet cream cheese filling, icing, and freshly-sliced strawberries; triple turtle devil's food cupcakes loaded with creamy fudge, caramel drizzle, and candied pecans; and luscious lemon buttery lemon cupcakes with lemon mousse and candied lemon," says Brett.

For dinner, Brett and Kai wanted to combine some of their favorite foods by doing one of their favorite things: making a meal out of appetizers. The guests had a wide variety of options including street tacos, macaroni and cheese, slider burgers, and french fry, salad, and fruit bars.

Choosing what to wear was another obvious choice for Kai and Brett, who both knew that they wanted to wear the same thing while incorporating the colors gray and navy blue. The couple ended up finding the perfect Calvin Klein suits from Men's Warehouse. However, the suits weren't the only decision to be made, and Brett suggests that couple's in the process of wedding planning should consider all other factors, too.

"Think about your budget: how much are you willing to spend? Also, start planning at least a year in advance, if not more. Once you have a date, book the venue right away, then book your photographer, florist, and DJ as soon as you can. If you are using David's Bridal for any of the dresses, reserve/buy the dresses early. We must have picked up a popular style because the dresses were on backorder for almost a year. Use theknot.com for your wedding information; it's a great way to organize everything and let your guests know all of your information for the wedding and gift registry. Lastly, be flexible and open to changing your mind," he says.

Despite all of the details that needed to be considered and the chaos that ensued, Brett and Kai have only positive memories of the big day. "My favorite part of the wedding was the first moment that Kai and I entered the Tropics Trail to the ceremony and saw all of our family and friends' faces. I was hit with a wave of emotion and could feel all of the love in the room. I didn't know where to look. When I first came out, I never thought that I would find the love of my life and get married, so feeling all of this love was the greatest feeling in the world," Brett says.

"Besides what Brett mentioned, another favorite moment was when my dad played his guitar. He sang 'Stand By Me' and got the rest of the guests to sing along with him. I was so touched and overwhelmed with emotions. There is a picture of me hugging Brett, crying and taking in the moment," adds Kai.

As Brett and Kai stand by each other, the memories they've made—from their chorus days to their wedding day—will continue to build as they share a lifetime of happiness together. ■

RESOURCES:

Photographer: Studio Laguna Photography
Date of Wedding: June 17, 2017
Dating Since: February 5, 2012
Location of Ceremony: Tropics Trail at the Minnesota Zoo
Location of Reception: Discovery Bay at the Minnesota Zoo
Florist: Wisteria Design Studio
Wedding Coordinator: Provided by the Minnesota Zoo
DJ and Photobooth: Music Mix Entertainment
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BY KASSIDY TARALA / PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY

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Cafe & Bar Lurcat is an obvious choice when looking for a wedding venue in Minneapolis. With its elegant indoor and outdoor settings, Cafe & Bar Lurcat is sure to bring the romance to any wedding, leaving the couple—and the guests—swooning. What makes it even better is the love story that resides behind the fancy staircases, old brick walls, and twinkling lights. That is the love story between Cafe & Bar Lurcat manager, Michelle Jensen, and her wife, Jessica Jensen.

Having met 10 years ago at a restaurant where the two worked, Michelle and Jessica quickly became best friends. Fast forward seven years, and the couple officially tied the knot on Sept. 20, 2014 at what was their obvious venue choice: Cafe & Bar Lurcat. “When marriage equality passed [in Minnesota], we had been together for six years, so to us there was never a time to pop the question, that had been settled long ago. We immediately started planning our wedding for the following year and we already knew that it had to be at Café & Bar Lurcat,” says Jessica.

Once the couple began planning their wedding, they knew right away that they wanted it to be elegant and romantic by using simple colors like black and ivory. “We kept the floral design simple and beautiful, and trusted John Veda to run with his own vision. He incorporated lots of green, soft pale pinks, and white into the arrangements. We loved our bouquets!” says Michelle.

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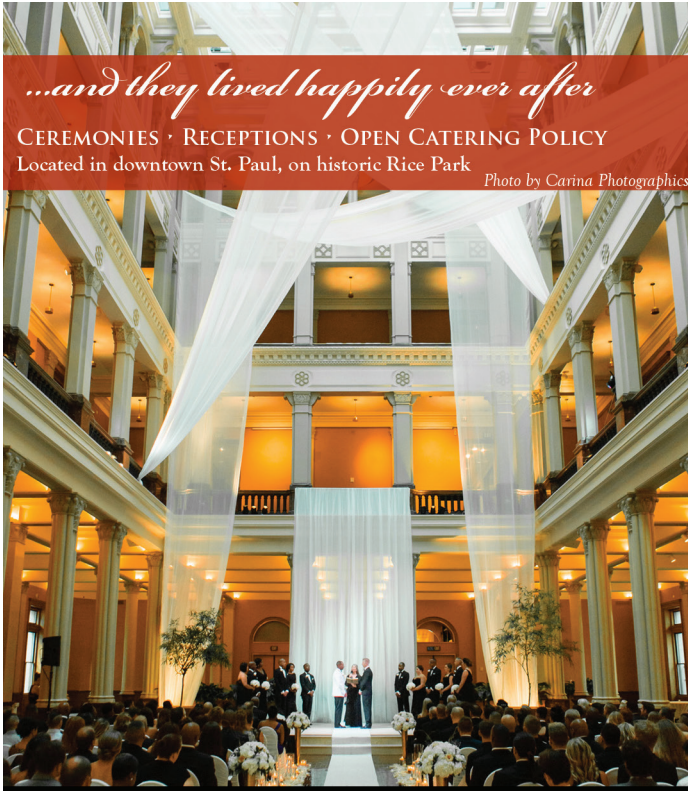
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tions, and Michelle and Jessica were so entranced by the beauty of them all that they decided to use the entire venue. The ceremony was held in the Cafe Lurcat, followed by a cocktail hour on one of the outdoor patios sprinkled with pretty lights and scenery.

The couple's wedding was a definite crowd pleaser for their 104 guests, but the wedding party might have been the ones to have the most fun. "We each had three people who stood up for us and gave them our own titles," Michelle says. On Jessica's side it was Best Man David Reyes, Queen B Rebecca Bann Aslakson, and First Lady Kim Oppgaard. On Michelle's side it was Best Man Michael Winton-Spatafora, Maid of Honor Kristin Kimball, and Bridesmaid Becky Hummer. They also had a ring bearer, Aaron Litschke.

However, the members of the wedding party that got the most attention weren't even the ones standing beside the brides. "When we started telling people we were getting married, we had a weird phenomenon of several of our gay male friends asking if they could be our flower girl—and they were serious! We couldn't pick just one, so we said they all six could go down the aisle. They really stole the show!" says Jessica.

"Our 'flower girls' were Ian Pernick, Jason Cofer, Anthony Abdallah, Ryan Gagnon, Bruce Anderson, and Dave Michela. They all wore matching Vera Wang tuxedos. These gentlemen stole the show during the ceremony by twirling down the aisle and tossing purple orchids from giant martini glasses. During cocktail hour, they drank martinis from them, too. They all had moments during the wedding that we will never forget. Our photographer, Alex Johnson, captured them perfectly. We have spent years growing together and these guys are our family," Michelle adds.

Jessica and Michelle's wedding, catered by Cafe & Bar Lurcat, had several dessert options. The two cut into a "wedding white" cake made by D'Amico & Partners pastry chef Leah Henderson, and the guests were able to try a variety of desserts with the dessert bar that offered petit fours and a coffee station.

"We were offered a complementary tasting at Café & Bar Lurcat. We were able to create our dream menu. Apple, cheese & chive salad, Berkshire pork tenderloin, sea bass marinated in miso, roasted cauliflower, and the seven oz. beef tenderloin were our favorites. To this day people tell us that this is the best food they've ever been served at a wedding," Michelle and Jessica say.

As the manager of Cafe & Bar Lurcat, Michelle often reflects on her own wedding experience when helping couples plan their big days at the venue. "I had no idea that I would actually end up doing the same thing for couples as we had both done for our own wedding. After our wedding, the 'wedding bug' stayed with me. I look back at our experiences when helping navigate couples that I work with at Lurcat now. I really enjoy working with couples and



their families. It takes me back to the most magical day of my life," she says.

Today, Michelle helps a number of couples between May and late October, Cafe & Bar Lurcat's busy wedding season, as well as a growing number of winter weddings. "Lurcat accommodates weddings of all sizes," she says, "there's a lot of love at Lurcat."

Between the two brides, nearly every aspect of the wedding contributed to their favorite moments. "The music was great, start to finish. We had the Loring String Quartet play during our ceremony, the Benny Weinbeck Jazz Trio during cocktails and dinner, and longtime friend DJ Lenka Paris kept us all dancing into the night. As a music fan, to

me that was awesome. Also, hearing our guests laughing as our flower girls twirled down the aisle. Nobody likes a boring wedding!" Jessica says.

"[My favorite part was] when I stood hand-in-hand with Jess, holding back tears of joy and finally being announced as a married couple. I was so emotional, especially while waiting to start the ceremony. I'll never forget it," says Michelle.

After the unforgettable wedding, Michelle and Jessica took off on a honeymoon to enjoy a few nights in a cottage at Larsmont in Two Harbors, Minnesota which allowed the couple to slow down and appreciate each other's company after the chaos of planning such an extravagant wedding. Additionally, they took a trip to Maui, Hawaii after the holidays when they had more time for a long vacation.

Michelle wants everyone to enjoy their weddings as much as she and Jessica loved theirs, which is why she isn't shy to give people advice during the wedding planning process. "Selecting a venue with amazing food and service should be at the top of the list. It doesn't matter if you are celebrating with an outdoor bar-becue or in a nice restaurant. You and your guests will remember delicious food, and they will never forget great service. Most importantly, it's your wedding, and it should represent you," she says.

With the beautiful scenery, romantic lighting and architecture, and delicious dinner and desserts of Cafe & Bar Lurcat, Michelle and Jessica's wedding definitely did just that: it represented them. ■

RESOURCES:

Photographer: Alex Johnson, Alex Johnson Photography
Date of Wedding: September 20, 2014
Dating Since: September 20, 2007
Location of Ceremony: Café Lurcat
Location of Reception: Bar Lurcat
Florist: John Veda of Café & Bar Lurcat
Wedding Coordinator: GM Christy O'Keefe Turman
Stylist: MN Bridal Hair and Makeup Artistry
Cake: Café & Bar Lurcat Chef Leah Henderson
Invitations: Paper Source



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AISLE FOR ALL AGES



BY KASSIDY TARRALA

I think the best thing about it not being the 1950s anymore is that it's not the 1950s anymore. Women can openly love women, men can openly love men, and people can ditch the labels and love whoever they decide to love. We still have a long way to go, but in contrast to the classic 1950s nuclear family comprised of a hardworking husband and a housewife clad in a floral apron and resentment, we've come a long way from what once was "traditional." With moving past the "traditional" lifestyle comes changing the "traditional" relationship. Although commonly represented as a young, happy couple starting their careers and moving into the next stage of their lives, it's time to recognize that people of all ages can find love—whether that be for the first or twelfth time. This is why I've put together a list of tips to help senior citizens who are in the process of planning a wedding.

Get a wedding planner.

After years full of life-changing experiences and newfound wisdom, it can seem almost foolish to ask for help to plan a wedding—especially if this isn't your first time down the aisle. Despite your previous knowledge or experience, asking for help from a professional will undoubtedly take a load of unnecessary stress off of your shoulders.

Change it up.

If you've already experienced a great love story in your lifetime, it's likely you're looking for ways to make this one seem fresh and exciting, not a repeat of the last. Use this new adventure you and your partner are about to embark on as a way to try something new. Blush-colored wedding dresses are especially popular among senior citizen brides as they bring something new while still maintaining the elegance of a traditional wedding.

Step outside of your comfort zone.

Coinciding with the last tip, many senior citizens choose to renew

their vows with their significant others. While it may be tempting to recreate the moment you two first said "I do," it's important that you don't get too stuck in the past. Changing small details like the type of flowers, the venue, or the desserts can bring a breath of fresh air to your vow renewal. For couples tying the knot for the first time, taking a step out of your comfort zone can be a good start to a new marriage. Perhaps having an exotic destination wedding or taking dance lessons prior to the wedding to show off some new fun, choreographed moves will put more excitement in your new romance.

Cut down the guest list.

Friends, family members, old coworkers—you might find that your preliminary guest list is never-ending, which can be overwhelming and costly. Cutting down the list can save you from spending too much and getting too stressed. Having a small wedding by only inviting family and close friends can be more intimate than a larger wedding. After all, it's all about appreciating the important things in life, right?

Don't feel like you can't have a registry.

You're probably not pining for new kitchen appliances, china, or home furnishings, but that doesn't mean you can't register for wedding gifts. A lot of older couples use their registry for a honeymoon that they wouldn't be able to afford on their own. Registering for experiences rather than things might be more suitable for you and your significant other so the two of you can try something you've never done before.

Weddings aren't just for young couples; they're for anyone in love. So whether this is your first or third time saying "I do," you can have the wedding of your dreams. As they say, have your cake and eat it, too... literally. ■



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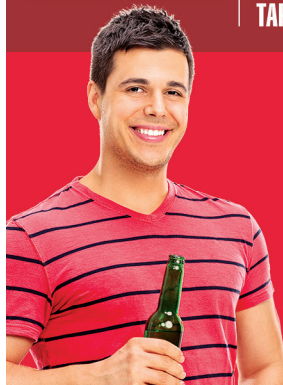
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ROMANCE ON THE DANUBE

RIVER CRUISING THROUGH PRAGUE, VIENNA & BUDAPEST



BY ERIC POOLE / PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF BRAND G VACATIONS

If you're in search of the perfect honeymoon spot, there is nowhere in the world quite as romantic as the Danube. This river, which flows from Germany to the Black Sea, is home to some of the most beautiful and picturesque cities on the planet.

And with just one river cruise, you can hit the romance trifecta: Prague, Vienna, and Budapest (with a side trip to Salzburg!).

PRAGUE

Prague was spared from bombing during WWII, so its cobblestone streets, gothic cathedrals, and astounding palace complex (the largest in the world) resembles a storybook come to life. You'll feel like you should

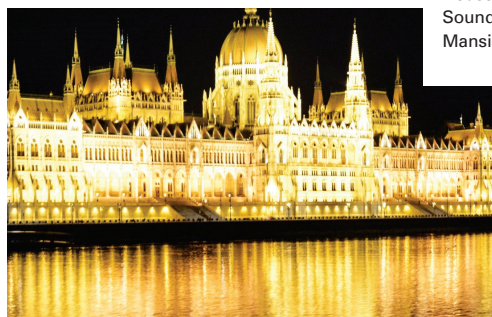
braid your hair and skip down the street. (This goes for the women, too.)

Be sure to walk across the Charles Bridge at sunrise or sunset. One of Prague's most photographed landmarks, it features 16 arches and three towers and is outrageously romantic. The tower on the Old Town side is considered to be one of the most astonishing gothic buildings in the world. And gracing both sides of the nearly half-mile long bridge are 30 statues that practically beg for a selfie.

Prague's Old Town is insanely charming. And in the middle of it is the renowned Astronomical Clock, a huge, medieval tower erected in 1410 with a timepiece that resembles a giant Bavarian cuckoo clock. Every hour on the hour, the clock performs a wonderful show that draws hun-



(Clockwise from top left) Prague Castle and the Charles Bridge. Vienna Opera House. Salzburg, The Sound of Music Mansion. Budapest.



dreds of spectators, many of whom kiss.

Prague is not actually on the Danube, but it's typically used as the beginning or end point for river cruises, because of its close proximity to Passau, Germany, where the river cruises depart.

VIENNA

Vienna is probably the grandest city in all of Europe. The buildings are gorgeous, the people are even *more* gorgeous (you kind of want to slap them), and everyone dresses like they're walking a runway.

The Ringstrasse is the wide, splendid boulevard that surrounds the center of Vienna. Most of the major sights—and there are many, including the Vienna Opera House, the Imperial Palace, Parliament and more—are found on this boulevard, which makes much of the sightseeing a snap.

And of course, Vienna is no slouch in the palace department. Sights like Schonbrunn Palace and the Imperial Palace give Versailles a run for its money. My favorite moment: a gay guy pointed to a giant chandelier in the ballroom of Schonbrunn and exclaimed, “Oh my God, we have that same one!”

At night, Vienna lights up with productions at venues like the State Opera (also known as the Vienna Opera House), the Kursalon and the Spanish Riding School, where the Lipizzaner Stallions perform.

The Vienna Opera House is flat-out one of the most stunning theatres, inside and out, that you will ever see. People dress to impress here—you'll often see lots of formalwear (although it's certainly not required). The Kursalon is a smaller theatre, but with an equally amazing pedigree—and is also a gorgeous venue to behold. Both offer classical concerts (the Opera also offers ballet). You'll want to hold hands just sitting in these extraordinary settings.

The Spanish Riding School is the home of the Lipizzaner Stallions, who are trained within an inch of their lives to do incredibly intricate “dressage” (very controlled, stylized jumps and movements). This is yet another stunning venue—even if the stage is dirt—with chandeliers and lots of beautifully dressed patrons. You can get standing room tickets here for \$25-30.

SALZBURG

Many Danube river cruises stop in Linz, Austria, from which you can take an excursion to Salzburg, the birthplace of Mozart and home to the

sights used in *The Sound of Music*. Salzburg's Old Town is a photographer's wet dream in itself; then add the *Sound of Music* tour (which gets 4.5-4.75 stars on the various review sites) and you have an incredibly memorable experience. Even if you're only a mild fan of the musical, you'll come away from this tour wanting to twirl on a mountaintop. Bone up on your *SOM* songs; you'll be singing along to them on the tour bus!

BUDAPEST

Budapest is, of course, two ancient cities—one known as Buda, the other Pest (pronounced with an “h”, as in “Pesht”)—that were joined together in the late 1800s. Conde Nast *Traveler* calls Budapest “the world's second-best city,” and for good reason. It has incredible Art Nouveau architecture, amazing food (a lot more than just goulash), and hot mineral springs that fuel the wildly popular Turkish baths.

One of the great joys of Budapest is floating down the Danube past the stunning museums and government buildings. Some river cruises include a nighttime sail that gives you a chance to capture fabulous photos of the brilliantly lit buildings. If this doesn't put stars in your partner's eyes, nothing will.

And those baths. (Minds out of the gutter, please.) “Taking the waters” has been a favorite pastime here since Roman times. You can take your choice of bathhouses, from medieval Turkish-era baths to Art Nouveau baths that are incredibly palatial to modern, contemporary spas with amazing water slides.

Budapest is the perfect end to a Danube river cruise—talk about a big finish! When you disembark in Budapest, you'll have concluded a European jaunt that you will never forget. More than one person has elected, at the last minute, to stay on the ship and sail all the way back again. ■

Eric Poole is Director of Marketing for Brand g Vacations, the LGBT River Cruise Experts.



FROM PARIS TO PRAGUE

ALONG GERMAN RIVERS



BY CARLA WALDEMAR / PHOTOGRAPHY BY LYDIA PRUETT

The swans were late for work. They'd been floating past our cabin's balcony every day since boarding Viking Cruise's riverboat *Alsvin* as we made our scenic way through Germany. We were sailing along the Mosel, Rhine and Main Rivers, bookended by land excursions in Europe's hottest destinations, Paris and Prague.

So let me ask you: is that the trip of a lifetime, or not? I'm treated onboard like the goddess I was surely meant to be, starting with the morning service to my spacious, window-walled stateroom, so swift that, returning from the belt-busting breakfasts—Benedicts, omelets, smoked salmon—my room was camera-ready, with my tossed socks meticulously folded and a bookmark inserted in my paperback (which there was no incentive to open, anyway, because the passing scenery gave us front seats in a travelogue that beat any bodice-ripper).

Perks included premier products in the bathroom, where my toes met heated floors, to movies on demand upon the intimate, 280-passenger ship, complete with chaises on the sundeck and meals worthy of Michelin stars—not to mention complimentary wine and beer while dining

and evening entertainment. It's totally tempting to remain onboard 24/7, but not with those picturesque, historic towns ready to welcome us via daily free walking excursions led by local experts.

First port of call: Trier, Germany's oldest city—inhabited by Celts long before Augustus' Roman troops marched in to create a "second Rome." But it was Emperor Diocletian who erected those lavish building projects in his own honor. Many remain, including *Porta Nigra*, a formidable gate in the city's four-mile wall, along with thermal baths, a huge amphitheater (lions vs. Christians) and behemoth basilica, all open to visit—as is the nearby *Liebfrauenkirch* of 1235, laying claims as the oldest Gothic church in Germany.

Trier's other famous son bashed everything Constantine adored: Karl Marx of *The Communist Manifesto* fame. Ironically, his birth home is now the euro equivalent of a dollar store. Spy it en route to the vivacious Market Square, bounded by glamorous half-timbered houses and gate to the former Jewish ghetto.

Next, on to photo-ready Bernkastel, through the first of scores of

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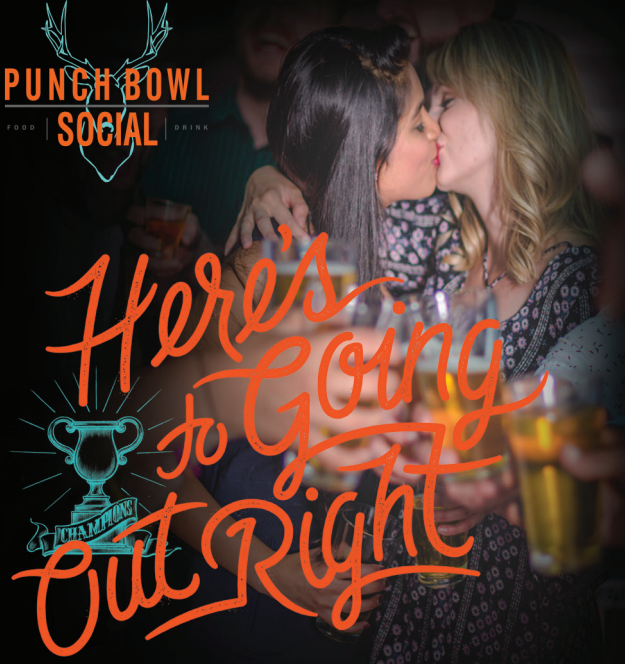


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river locks (cameras out, eyes peeled), past the initial thousand-or-so vineyards we'll spot, climbing like green corn rows up the scalps of near-vertical hillsides.

Timing is everything. We arrived at the height of the town's annual wine festival, in the throes of a boisterous parade of costumed revelers and tootling oompah band. The cobblestones spilled with seriously partying seniors, swaying with locked arms as they bellowed drinking songs. Even more wine stalls lined the riverbank, pouring excellent Riesling at two euros a brimful glass.

We awoke in Cochem the next morning as fog drifted across the façade of its majestic castle, left in ruin after Napoleon rampaged through town. Today it's been restored to its Renaissance glory, where seven of its 50 rooms open to visit flaunt fireplaces paved in Delft tiles, walls with hidden passages, a hunting room hung with boar heads and antlers, and knights' armor clanking. In Cochem's cozy Town Square, we succumb to an indulgent pastry before browsing shops overhanging the cobble streets.

In Koblenz, the Mosel mingles with the mighty Rhine at Deutsches Eck ("German Corner"), presided over by a giant statue of Kaiser Wilhelm on his uber-horse. Graceful riverside promenades are shaded by the 12th-century Basilica of St. Kastor, gleaming with joyously painted spines spanning its chalk-white ceiling. The 12th-century Liebfraukirche anchors a pretty square that's hub of tempting shopping streets.

Koblenz is the launching point of the legendary Middle Rhine—the rock star of the journey, studded with formidable Medieval fortress-castles and picturesque ruins that dominate hillsides at every bend. Lazing on the sundeck, we watch trains scooting along the riverbank and small towns ready for their close-up. Then, time for dinner: rack of lamb or halibut? Duck breast or pepper-seared salmon? Just say yes.

Today is another "oldest." Heidelberg boasts the oldest university in Germany; some of its students joined us for lunch and conversation in the Hotel Ritter, a landmark since 1592. Skip dessert in favor of the local sweet called sneeball—snowball—which is anything but: layers of piecrust glued with chocolate.

Yet another castle dominates the skyline—this one looking like an out-of-control Home Depot project. Past its moat, filled with wild animals to eat or be eaten by, stands this home of 17-year-old royal newlyweds Friedrich and Elizabeth. Hubby built his bride a romantic gateway, rose



garden, and aviary. Add-ons over the decades include a library, ladies' quarters, and guard rooms, churning from Gothic to Renaissance to Baroque until felled by fire, which left only these photo-ready ruins.

The town's main street is an expanse of mug-and-T-shirt shops, motivating us to scurry back to the boat to dine, this time, on truffled cassoulet, mesclun and fresh fig salad, and pork tenderloin, girding us for the next day's excursion along the Romantic Road (unromantically closed for construction) to decidedly romantic Rothenberg: Germany's best-preserved medieval village and intact city wall, which the brave may climb to peer onto tiled roofs, church spires, and blooming gardens.

St. Jakob's Church is home to an elaborately carved wooden altar and stony saints pacing its exterior. A former monastery enfolds the Museum of Crime and Torture—spiked chairs, Iron Maidens, shaming masks, chastity belts—utilized to induce a confession rather than as punishment. We paused for lunch at Glock on classic fare: potato soup, bratwurst with sauerkraut, apple strudel—before heading to Wurzburg to visit the prince-bishop's residential extravaganza, which puts Versailles to shame. He hired Italian bold-name painter Tiepolo for the frescoes above the grand staircase leading to the voluptuous White Hall, Imperial Hall, and sumptuous chapel anchoring the Baroque garden.

Nurnberg's next, site of the infamous Nazi Party Rally grounds of 1935, with its pulpit for Hitler's rants and pillars flaunting swastika flags. Then the Palace of Justice, where war crimes were tried. Finally, Bamberg, a medieval city honored by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, where we bid goodbye to our boat.

Its Town Hall, sporting murals like medieval billboards, is planted smack in the middle of the river, whose bridge leads to a worth-the-climb Cathedral, housing the tomb of Henry II and the famed Bamberg Rider statue (Horse in a church? Only here). Aside it hover the half-timbered houses prized as a movie set for *The Three Musketeers*. A rose garden overlooks Bamberg's generous supply of breweries, where its special rauch bier (smoked beer) reigns. It's admittedly an acquired taste (which I was quick to acquire).

The trip began in Paris, including a bus tour of that luminous city's fabled highlights, then plentiful free time to explore—for me, the Marais, boho Latin Quarter, a couple of museums, dinners of beef tartare—before boarding a coach heading to Luxembourg, and a peek into advanced civilization employed at a Burger King comfort stop, where we found bottles of bubbly Taittinger and Veuve Clicquot on its shelves. (Fries with that?) Luxembourg's genteel capital invokes primo people-watching from the town square, fringed with outdoor cafes.

Our journey ended in vivacious Prague with another tour—fabled castle and Charles Bridge to the lively town square's clock tower and another duck dinner divine. To join the fun, visit www.vikingrivercruises.com . ■



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Invitations were from Minted.com with a foil finish.

THOMAS EVERS & NGUYEN BUI



Photographer: Nga Tran;
Nana, Daring Greatly Photography
Date of Wedding: September 16, 2017
Dating Since: September 14, 2006
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Green
Acres Event Center, Eden Prairie
Paper Pinwheels: Nguyen Bui
Cake: Keys Café and Bakery
Invitations: Minted.com



The grooms commissioned a beautiful 30" tall Minnesota "guest book" wall hanging from 3NailsDesigns found at Etsy.com. The wood is cedar and was stained and finished to be written on by guests.



All signs/graphics were designed and framed by the groom, Nguyen Bui.



The wedding cake was made by Key's Café and Bakery in Woodbury. It was an almond cake filled with raspberry. The cake toppers were found salt and pepper shakers.



Instead of hiring a photo booth company, the grooms used an iPad attached to a tripod and bought a photo booth app called Simple Booth. They gathered props together, made a sign, and had the guests have their own fun! In total they spent \$120.00; it was positioned the entire night and it didn't need anyone to watch over it.



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Receptions and ceremonies are typically held in the hayloft space, the hayloft doors open and close at a touch of a button.



The outside of the barn is lit up with almost any color, the color is chosen whomever is holding the event.



In lieu of table numbers, the grooms named each table after places of significance to either groom individually or both of them as a couple. The place cards were designed by the groom, Nguyen Bui, and printed on SocialPrintStudio.com.



Green Acres Event Center is a turnkey event venue; linens, place settings, and most décor is provided by the venue. Most couples at the venue only need to worry about the centerpieces and any additional décor/wants. The pinwheels were handcrafted by the groom, Nguyen Bui.



The first floor connects to the grain silo which is used as a wine cellar and is a great space for the wedding party to get dressed.



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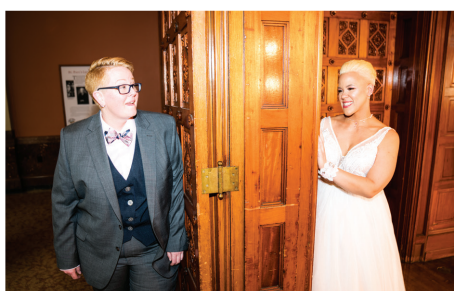
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DENISE & TOLA OCHOCKI
 With their five daughters: Cassandra, Miya, Asia, Hannah, and Emma

Photographer: BD Portraits - Brent Dundore Photography
 Date of Wedding: April 28, 2017
 Dating Since: 2015
 Location of Ceremony & Reception: The Landmark Center in St. Paul
 Florist: Hyvee, Oakdale
 Caterer: Hyvee, Oakdale
 Makeup: Sunshine, facebook.com/radianceofsunshine
 Desserts: Amy and Caitlyn Decker
 Cake: Dana Cakes





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Photographer: Christine Photography
 Date of Wedding: July 14, 2017
 Dating Since: July 2014
 Location of Ceremony:
 Excelsior Commons, Excelsior
 Location of Reception:
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 Florist: Creative Suz
 Wedding Coordinator: Bridget Boyd
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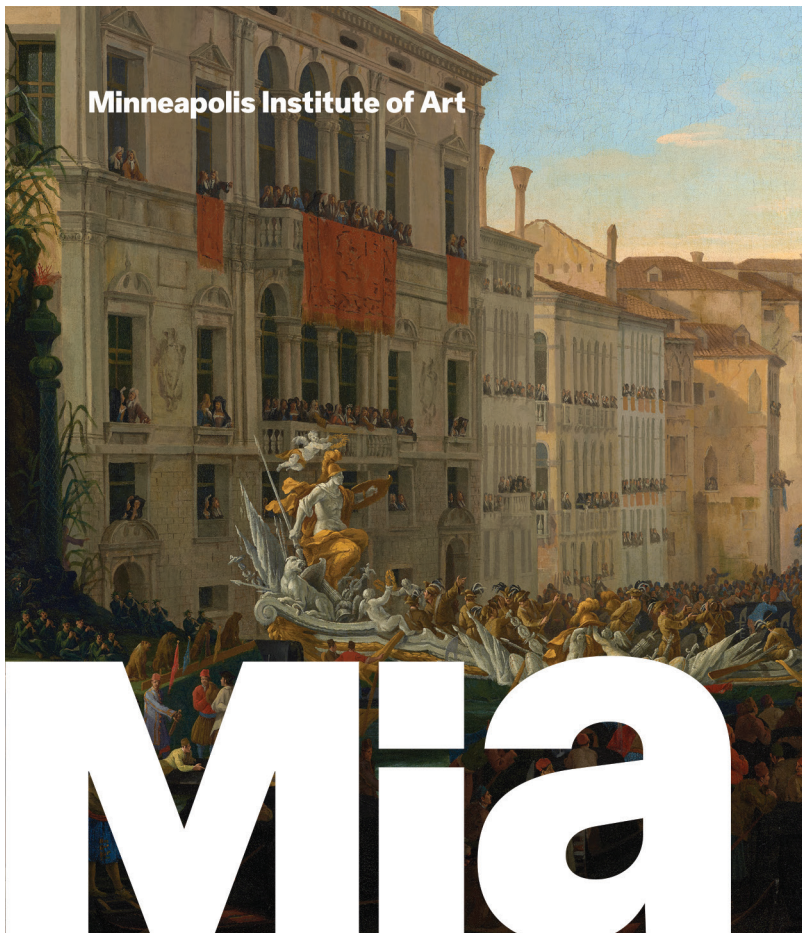


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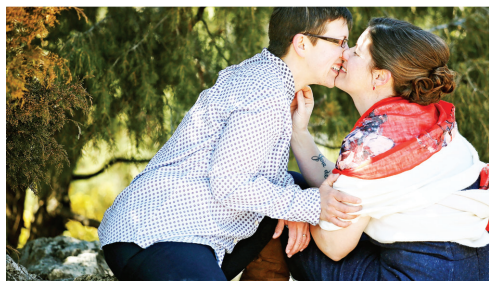
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This exhibition was organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and the Cleveland Museum of Art, and is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Images: Luca Carlevarius (Italian, 1663–1730);
Regatta on the Grand Canal in Honor of Frederick IV,
King of Denmark (detail), 1711, The J. Paul Getty
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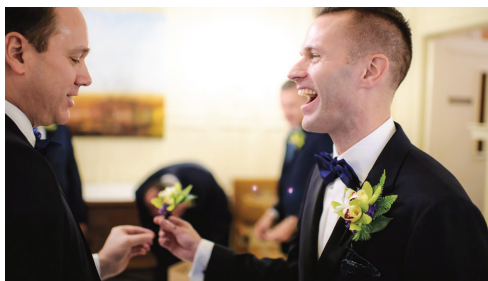
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Dating Since: September 2013

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Wedding Coordinator: Bre Ward from Bre is Fun

Dress: Honeypie Boutique, alterations by JenMar

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Suit: Macy's, alterations by Fashion Ration

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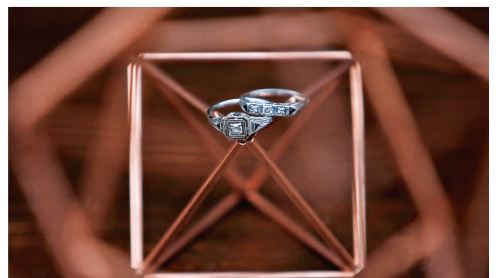
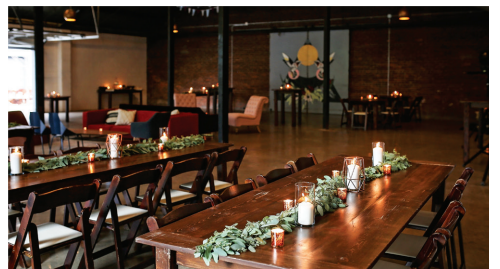
Cake: Angel Food Cupcakes

Caterer: Gastrotruck

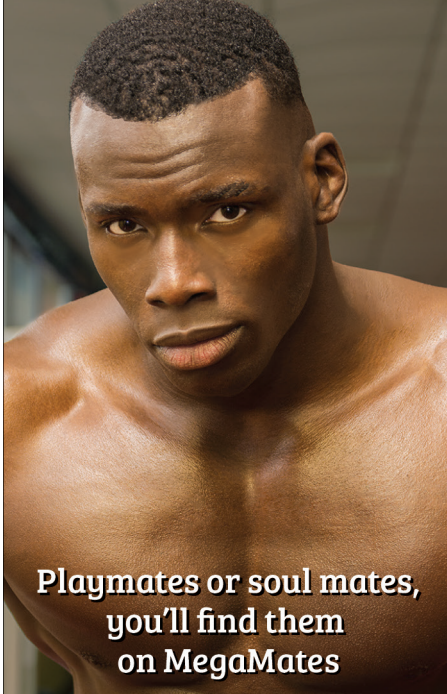
Decor: Rudy's Event Rentals

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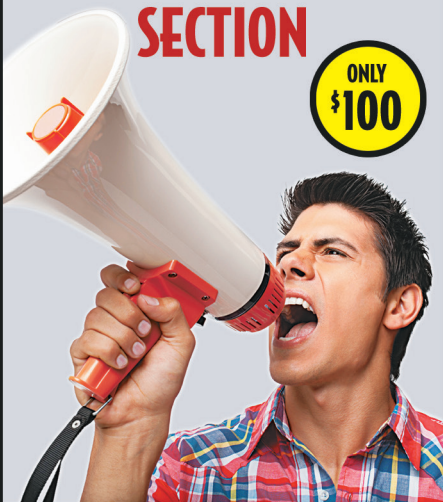
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